Vision of Park

The newly created waterfront park will allow residents and visitors free and universal public access to a significant regional environmental and recreational resource, the Bass River. Creating primarily open space, the park design also envisions a boardwalk, picnic and shade pavilions, bicycle racks, a kayak rental building, restrooms, and parking, thus promoting a range of low intensity water dependent uses and recreation. The park site already includes boating facilities, docks and a kayak ramp, providing direct waterfront access for recreational boating and at the same time benefiting the Town of Dennis with revenue opportunities. The revenue generated will be used exclusively for upkeep and maintenance of the park property and its facilities.

The park is conceived as an environmental showcase, erasing decades of commercial uses with a new, ecologically friendly based open space that will restore scenic views, reintroduce native plants and wildlife habitat and improve the water quality of Bass River. Landforms and vegetation will look like and fit into the Cape Cod landscape. Uniquely, the park design incorporates sustainable bio-retention areas, or infiltration meadows, to control and treat storm water runoff from Rt. 28 before entering the Bass River. The meadows will be designed with native plants and will be merged with the landscape design. These specialized and sometimes flowering plantings will add beauty to the overall park while protecting Bass River.

Bass River Park (BRP or Park) is envisioned as a new local and regional destination and signature gateway for West Dennis, specifically, and the Town of Dennis as a whole. As part of the broader West Dennis Village planning effort and district, the proposed BRP contributes vital open space and recreational resources and opportunities to the greater mix of retail, commercial, and residential uses concentrated in the village. The town residents recently approved new zoning changes for West Dennis, one change being re-zoning of the area that includes BRP from commercial to a newly created marine open space district, promoting low intensity water dependent uses and recreation. This is an opportunity to create a park in perpetuity that both tourists and citizens can enjoy.

In addition, the park gives the Town of Dennis the opportunity to incorporate three contiguous town properties,(the others being Merrill Park and the town boat ramp) that total approximately 6 acres and front the Bass River for just under a quarter of a mile. It is probably the longest stretch of continuous waterfront on Rt. 28 and certainly is the longest stretch of river waterfront in the mid-Cape area. Envisioned are

pathways in BRP that will extend into the other two properties, creating a pedestrian network and providing public access from the village to its riverfront. It has the potential for becoming something the Town can be proud of for generations to come.

Funding for Acquisition

The property was acquired in December 2005 for $3.2 million with financing coming from a number of sources:

$500 thousand---Dennis Conservation Trust

$800 thousand---Community Preservation/Land Bank

$500 thousand---State Urban Self-Help Grant

$1.4 million------Federal Grant from National Transportation Bill

Selection of Architect and Development of a Site Plan

In December 2005, the Dennis Board of Selectmen appointed a group of citizens as members of the Bass River Park Use Committee (BRPUC). Their charge was to develop short and long range suggestions for the use and design of the property.

In May 2006 Town Meeting approved $15,000 for an initial site plan once a landscape architectural firm was commissioned.

A subcommittee of the BRPUC interviewed several architectural firms in September 2006. Stoss Landscape Urbanism, (Chris Reed, principle) was the unanimous choice as the firm to develop the conceptual plans for BRP. A preliminary site plan was presented to the town in December 2006.

The BRPUC applied for and received voter approval at the September 2006 Town Meeting for an additional $50,000 in Community Preservation funds. These funds were used to provide the detailed engineering and landscaping plans needed for grant applications and funding.

The BRPUC met with the team from Stoss three times over the course of the fall and early winter of 2006/2007 to provide input on the character, uses and amenities envisioned by the committee. The Use Committee developed these inputs with help from the community at large during its

numerous public meetings. These views were incorporated into the final conceptual plan that was presented to and approved by the Board of Selectmen on February 13, 2007. The plans included boat slips, fishing piers, walking paths, picnic tables, covered shelters, a boat ramp for kayaks and canoes, a kayak rental facility and boat tours, restrooms, outdoor showers and changing rooms, as well as native plantings that will showcase the natural beauty of a Cape Cod waterfront park.

Summer 2007 Celebration

The commercial buildings on the site were demolished in two stages. The first stage took place in June 2006 with the removal of the restaurant building which was located at the edge of the Bass River. In June 2007, the second stage took place. This was the removal of the commercial buildings along Rt. 28. All of this was made possible through the donated efforts of several local contractors (PKM, Ed Crowell, and Robert Childs). Committee members and local community volunteers completed the clean up process to prepare the site for public use in the summer. The town installed and leased boat slips and kayak rentals were available by July 2007. A kickoff party in mid-July to celebrate the acquisition of the property as well as the removal of the commercial buildings was attended by several hundred towns' people including the contractors. Other notables in attendance included town officials, U.S. Representative Delahunt (who was instrumental in securing the Federal funds used in the acquisition of the property)and State Representative Cleon Turner. The festivities featured a barbecue, Dixieland band, and boat tours.

Continuing the Design Process

The Committee applied for and received voter approval for $116,000 in Community Preservation funds at the September 2007 Town Meeting. These funds were designated for the detailed schematic plans and construction documents for the final park design needed for bidding the project, grant applications and funding.

The site plan for the park, developed by Stoss Landscape Urbanism, was approved by the Board of Selectmen in December 2007. Since that time the committee has been working closely with Chris Reed, the architect, to refine the plans so that they reflect the landscape and architecture of Cape Cod while also being mindful of cost containment. While the plans are still being refined there is a set available for review at Town Hall. As always, we welcome suggestions and comments.

On February 4, 2008 Stoss presented the plans at a Special Review by the Planning Board at Town Hall. The Planning Board's review was advisory in nature and provided some guidance in moving forward with the site plans.

What's happening now?

The final design was completed in the fall 2008 and reviewed and approved by the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board and Conservation Commission. Town administration, department heads, and citizens of the town contributed their expertise and suggestions throughout the year, culminating in a final plan that is representative of all this input. Construction Documents were then prepared and the town put the project out to bid in late fall. A final announcement of the successful bidder has not been made at the time of this report. The Department of Environmental Protection is completing a review of the park design to assure compliance with federal wetlands regulations. It is hoped that construction of the park could begin this summer. In the meantime, the

park's boat slips and kayak concession brought much needed revenue to the town and will be used to help maintain the park site.

More great news centers on the funding for the park's construction. The town hired Bailey Boyd Associates to help write a PARC grant application to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services. The town was successful in being awarded a $500,000 matching grant. The Community Preservation Committee recommended $500,000 from CPA funds be used to match the State grant and at Special Town Meeting in November, the town approved this appropriation.

It is the hope of the BRPUC that development of the park would commence in 2009. The Committee also submitted applications for grants on behalf of the town. We were successful in being awarded $15,000 for design services and a $350 Dennis Arts and Culture grant to fund Paul Nossiter's Dixieland Band at the second annual summer park party which took place in June 2008. Support for the park also came from the West Dennis Junior Yacht Club. They held a car wash and raised enough money to purchase the park's first bench. At the summer park party, the Board of Selectmen thanked the club for their generous gift. The Committee would like the summer party to become an annual event and are seeking suggestions and support from the community as to what they would like to have on that day. We have been asked to identify other potential items needed at the park that could be donated or sponsored and we plan to do so.